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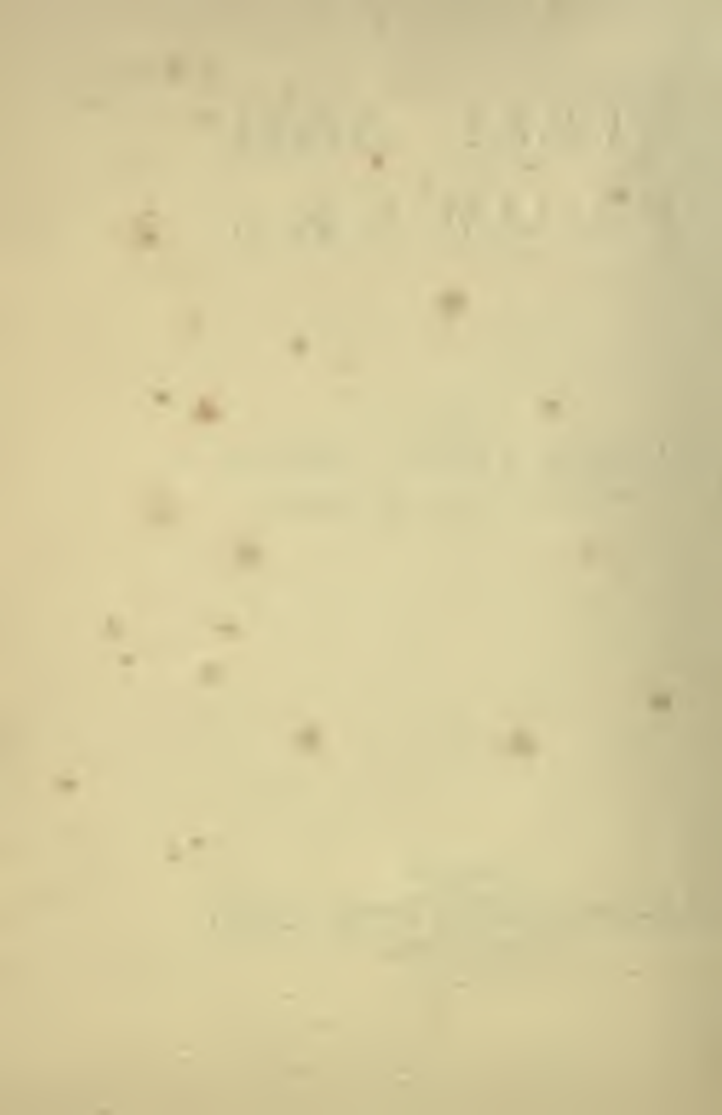
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# STEEL AND FLOWERS

## The Ballad of Frimley Town

(OCTOBER, 1914)

THE soldiermen through Frimley town  
Go marching day by day ;  
And some to sleep shall lay them down  
On Belgian fields burned black and brown,  
Nor heed the maids of Frimley town  
That call to them alway.

The sun on Frimley town that shines  
Looks down on Mons and Lille ;  
Here, by the autumn firs and pines,  
On flag and bayonnetted lines,  
On sword and spur and trump it shines,  
But there on redder steel.

## THE BALLAD OF FRIMLEY TOWN

But when the paler lamps of night  
    Gleam dimly on the plains,  
The living relics of the fight  
May see that softer, fairer light  
That lit their steps some summer night  
    Through scented Surrey lanes.

And John, whose shoulder gives him pain,  
    And Bill, whose knees are numb,  
And Tom, who swears he'll fight again,  
And Ted, whose pal is with the slain,  
And thinks hurt hearts hold most of pain,  
    Dream, while the guns are dumb.

Yes, Frimley town is far away  
    When shadows strew the ground.  
The men who sleep, the girls who pray,  
The children who forget to play,  
Together walk down Frimley way,  
    Until the bugles sound.

O women with your patient eyes,  
    Whence flow the hot tears down,  
Beyond these black, war-smitten skies,  
There is a lasting Paradise,  
To be beholden of your eyes,  
    More fair than Frimley town.

## Awakening

O I HAVE plucked the fruit of stars  
Ripened on Autumn eves,  
And put my sickle in the Sun  
And bound his gold in sheaves,  
And gathered on Parnassus Hill  
The scented blooms and leaves.

And I have sought the dawn-bright pearl  
Far hidden in the deep,  
Fairer than tears that dim the moon  
When the sad angels weep,  
And brought dream-laden argosies  
Across the seas of sleep.

Midnight has borne my soul away  
To lands of song and flowers,  
Where silver bells shed melody  
From burnished agate towers,  
And love and youth go hand in hand,  
Through all the golden hours.

## AWAKENING

But did I travel Heaven and Earth  
Surely I'd come again  
To smell the clover-laden wind,  
To taste the sudden rain,  
To see the roses in the hedge  
In any Devon lane.

To look on billowy fields of wheat,  
Gold, green and scarlet blent,  
The melting grey and heather-soft  
Wide waves of Surrey, bent  
By winds that shake, in orchard trees,  
The pink and white of Kent.

And where, save here at home, may I,  
Standing on down or tor,  
Watch the red swooning sun pour out  
His spirit on Exmoor,  
And fade in flickers of faint flame  
Below the Severn shore ?

My blood is in the Autumn trees  
That crowd the banks of Dart,  
It throbs in ev'ry shaking reed  
Where Thames and Cotswold part,  
And all the song of Hertfordshire  
Comes echoing in my heart !



## AWAKENING

O never seemed the Weald so fair,  
The Malvern Hills so green.  
Nor twixt the fields of Warwickshire,  
Where Shakespeare's feet have been,  
Avon's unflurried seaward flow  
So consciously serene,

As now when ev'ry fleeting wind  
Whispers a thing abhorred,  
And hands that twitch with sateless greed  
Come groping hitherward,  
And men who walk behind the plough  
Look down, and see a sword.

Can it be alien feet may tread  
The paths that I have trod?  
And shall the foreign ploughshare break  
Next year, a Sussex clod,  
I, be a slave, in those same fields  
Where late I walked with God?

We who were nurtured on thy breast,  
Whose blood is thine, whose days  
Were only happy when the sun  
Lit feet that trod thy ways,  
Who ever seek and vainly seek  
England, to speak thy praise.

## AWAKENING

Here is the best pledge of our love,  
Proof of our praise, that we  
Arise, bind up our fate with thine,  
Go forth beyond the sea,  
And stand, a living barrier,  
Between thy foes and thee.

## Return

I SHALL step outward to the night,  
The night unguessed, unplumbed, unknown,  
And you beside a shaded light,  
Will sing the old sweet songs alone.

Kissed cold of steel, caressed of flame,  
And right or wrong, by law or chance,  
A cross with a familiar name,  
Will mark one silence more in France.

But when the perfume from your hair  
Is gone, your springtime fragrance o'er,  
Perhaps some kindly wind will bear,  
My dust home to your cottage door.

## An Interlude

TOUCHED by her hands the vibrant strings  
Respond in dulcet murmurings  
Of quaver, chord and semitone.  
Sweet as soft odours vaguely blown  
From gardens where the throstle sings.

The almond blossom from the tree  
Falls not to earth more tenderly  
Than fall upon the trancèd gloom,  
In rhythmic cadence, bloom by bloom,  
These flow'rs of mystic melody.

Where the gaunt pine-trees cut the night  
Wanders a poet, hid from sight,  
Who darkly hides within his heart  
And carries to a place apart,  
Each fragrant echo of delight.

## Hereafter

It's Autumn-time on Salisbury Plain.

Let it be Autumn-time again

When life is cured of this black pain

And I go home, go home again,

By Highgate on the Hill.

For there's a little wood I know

Where all the trees of wonder grow,

And shadows like cool waters flow

'Twixt ivied banks on beds of moss,—

Mingle and merge and fade and cross.

And you may come and you may go

And never in that holy place

Look upon a German face.

The trees have all grown as they will

In the wood by Highgate on the Hill :

Great oaks with many a lichen sash

And elm and birch, and may and ash,

In twos and threes they stand together

In all the splendid autumn weather.

## HEREAFTER

And in between and left and right  
Are laurel bushes green and bright.  
Acorns and chestnuts patter down  
On leaves all gold and red and brown,  
All gold and red and brown and grey  
That dance the afternoon away.

October's quick and golden rains  
Wander in rivers down the lanes,  
Or make, in hollows, little ponds  
Where pebbles shine like diamonds.  
From breakfast-time till after tea  
In ev'ry branch of ev'ry tree  
The starlings, like a lot of boys,  
For love of life make heaps of noise :  
Such noise,—there is no gladder sound  
In all the glad year's tuneful round  
Such placid anger, peaceful rage—  
What actors on what airy stage  
What comedy for what a wage !  
Children and birds and autumn trees,—  
The world were well content with these.

When bloody William and his son  
Are safely dead at last, and one  
May go believing there's no dearth

## HEREAFTER

Of glory yet upon the Earth,—  
A glory, not of fire and smoke  
And things that burst and blind and choke,  
A wonder, not of eyes that turn  
To some new thing to blast and burn,  
A wisdom, not of thrusts and stabs  
And stripes and stars and scarlet tabs,  
A worship, not of poisoned breath  
And little children done to death,—  
These shall delight my soul at last  
When then is now and now is past,  
Where the many-scented dews distil  
In the wood by Highgate on the Hill.  
There I shall find forgotten themes,  
And empty husks of faded dreams  
Whose seed, far scattered, soon or late,  
Shall find soft soil and germinate ;  
Remember I am still a boy  
And haply rediscover joy,  
Youth and all that follows after  
Vanished vision and lost laughter.  
All the wood will shout and sing  
At my great remembering.  
Ev'ry leaf will be a voice  
Tuned to welcome and rejoice,  
Sky and wind and blade and tree  
Stretch forth hands to welcome me.

## HEREAFTER

Deep in the wood lie hidden springs  
Of half of life's delightful things.  
A stirring leaf, a bird in flight  
Will start soft flames of coloured light  
That leap and dance and flash and burn  
Through waving grass and feathery fern.  
Music will tell an ancient tale  
When moonrise wakes a nightingale.  
Here is the rich, sweet smell of earth  
Movement and melody and mirth :  
Such mirth as flashes from the eyes  
Of Gabriel in Paradise,  
Such melody as when he sings,  
Such movement as his flaming wings,  
For woods and Paradise are one  
When seen beneath an autumn sun.  
I shall be home again and hear  
Sounds that subdue the soul's worst fear.  
I shall be home again and find  
All that is pitiful and kind,  
Healing for nerves left torn and sore  
By red monotony of War.

O Wood by Highgate on the Hill,  
When fighting's over be there still !



## Reveillé

IN the place to which I go,  
Better men than I have died.  
Freeman friend and conscript foe,  
Face to face and side by side,  
In the shallow grave abide.

Melinite that seared their brains,  
Gas that slew them in a snare,  
War's inferno of strange pains,  
What are these to them who share  
That great boon of silence there?

When like blood the moon is red ;  
And a shadow hides the sun,  
We shall wake, the so-long dead,  
We shall know our quarrel done,—  
Will God tell us who has won?

## The Daily Sacrifice

(JANUARY, 1915)

*"More men, more men!"* He heard the cry  
And set his wife and children by,  
For he who did not fear to die  
Dared not to look on tears.

By hill and stream in lane and field,  
He marched and turned and formed and wheeled,  
Body and soul and brain did yield  
Through weeks that seemed like years,—

Till came that bitter brutal day  
When twenty miles of ocean lay  
Twixt him and them ;—what use to pray  
When bullets answer swift ?

## THE DAILY SACRIFICE

Through days and nights of blood and sweat  
He wrote "I am in safety yet——"  
Then seemed his fingers to forget  
His shattered fancy's drift.

They heard and neither wept nor curst,  
Spoke soft his name. Sometimes rehearsed  
The happy pride he had, when first  
He stepped a Fusilier.

But waking in a widowed bed  
His wife cried to the stars and said,  
"I gave him willingly, but dead  
I would his grave were here."

## In Kent

(MAY, 1915)

FROM Rochester and Bethersden,  
From Oxney Isle and Appledore  
They went, the comeliest of men,  
Rifle in hand, away to war.

'They fight in Flanders. All the day  
And all the night the hot blood runs.  
In Kent the thrush pipes noon away,  
In France they hear the song of guns.

The orchard blossom trembles white  
About the slopes of Edenbridge,  
Somewhere in France they die to-night  
Who walked at dawn on such a ridge.

## IN KENT

And he who found the primrose sweet  
And wore it in his coat an hour,  
In Chatham heard the war-drums beat  
And pluckt in France another flower.

Round Staplehurst the fields are fair,—  
O when will haply come again  
The feet that walked behind the share,  
The hands that sowed the yellow grain?

Daylong the crash of battle wakes  
Its echo in the widow's ears,  
Daylong the earth burns red and quakes  
Where fight the Buffs and Fusiliers.

And still the lark sings on above,  
The air is sweet with lilac scent;  
O stay the harvest, God of Love,  
Until our men come home to Kent.

## Hallucination

UNDER the dripping skies,  
Forgotten and forlorn,  
She turns her sleepless eyes,  
Unblessed in night and morn,  
To where her lover lies.

So in unfriendly night  
Her soul may watch him sleep,  
And with the morning light  
His steps her soul doth keep  
In spiritual sight.

She saith, "A little bliss  
I may in fancy find :  
When blows the wind I wis  
His arms are round me twined,  
The raindrops are his kiss."

## Mr. Starling

O STARLING, in the apple tree,  
Sweet amateur in minstrelsy,  
Wearing the blackbird's cast-off coat,  
Mocking his golden-happy note,  
Thou art a thing of utter blame.  
O creature, with no sense of shame,  
Enough of courage to maraud  
Hast thou, of daring to defraud.  
The raven black without and in  
Is only bent on honest sin ;  
But thou, less virtuous than he,  
Dost practise sinful honesty.  
Thou art an acrobat of sorts.  
I see thee in thy daily sports  
Performing for my delectation,  
High in thy bleak and breezy station,  
Such antics as no other feather  
Would venture in this rheumy weather.  
The arch dissembler of the trees,  
Thief, scapegrace—thou art all of these.  
And yet on roof and wall and bough  
Best loved, thou bad, blithe bird art thou,  
Starling,  
For of all things that warble hoot or croak,  
Thou art the one that canst enjoy a joke.

## A Ballad of Essex in Winter-time

OF Sussex and of Wessex,  
Of Devon, rich and red,  
And all the men therefrom that went,  
The maids with whose their fates were blent,  
The word is sung and said,  
But who shall sing of Essex ?

I wander here and wonder  
That life may thuswise be  
So loosely held by hands so frail,  
That breath in failing does not fail,  
Nor springs the spirit free  
From threads that well-nigh sunder.

Grown grey of utter sorrow  
For some unspoken thing,  
The leagues of barren meadow lie  
Beneath a bleak and barren sky,  
Unkissed of any Spring  
In any Winter's morrow.



## A BALLAD OF ESSEX IN WINTER-TIME

The plains stretch wide and callow  
Through countless hours adream ;  
The wraiths of barn and cottage gaze  
Upon the shapes of vanished days  
That ever darkly gleam  
In oozy marsh and shallow.

And he who has in keeping  
A grief of empty years,  
May find in these grey trees of eld  
More sighs than any heart has held,  
In ev'ry shadow tears,  
A land grown wan in weeping.

By fold and ditch and burrow  
The weed-strown waters wind.  
The ploughman bending o'er his plough  
Seems now a man, a goblin now ;  
The crows flap sad and blind  
O'er every empty furrow.

Night-long the sea winds revel  
About the frozen coast ;  
The sound rolls backward from the stars,  
As if forgot at Heaven's bars,  
Some disappointed ghost  
Sought solace of the Devil.

## A BALLAD OF ESSEX IN WINTER-TIME

And where the murky river  
    Weds with the sateless sea,  
The doom-charged ships of battle lie,  
The wood-piled London barges ply,  
    And low round Manningtree  
The pale lights glint and shiver.

Too tired for love or hating,  
    Older it seems than death,  
For sound too full of healthless sleep,  
With nought to ask and nought to keep,  
    And scarcely drawing breath,—  
A land for ever waiting.

## Yvonne

WHEN old Stephani plays  
His magic violin  
On Winter Saturdays,  
Down at the Anchor Inn,  
Some step beyond the door,  
And some fall fast asleep,  
But there are three or four  
Who list, and two who weep.

Old bent Stephani plays  
Strange tunes that he has found  
In dim forgotten days,  
And things put under ground.  
His notes are words of rose  
Soft scented, white and red ;  
And there's one air he knows  
That makes me wish him dead.

## YVONNE

For when Stephani plays  
That tune of snow and flame,  
I walk in shadowed days,  
And breathe a shadowed name.  
Then they who laugh are two,  
And two there be who cry,  
The bow, Yvonne, and you,  
The violin and I.

## A Mid-Winter's Dream

I GATHERED moonbeams on a wintry shore  
    When all the land lay frore,  
And salt sea surf and starry icicles,  
White wind-flung foam and opalate sea-shells,  
And fairest weeds from deepest ocean strayed :  
Of these I shaped in dreams a dream-fair maid.

And we were lovers in a world of frost, . . .  
    She sang of good ships lost,  
Of eyeless men who walk beneath the sea,  
Of rusted anchor, pale anemone,  
Of golden coins bestrewn on golden sand,  
The ancient ocean's various contraband.

Her words were all of loss and change and death.  
    The north wind was her breath ;  
And on her cheek, her breast, her finger tips  
Was ice, and ice was on her brow and lips,  
And in the silver meshes of her hair,  
And in her heart : and yet how she was fair !

## A MID-WINTER'S DREAM

And now whene'er the chill wind whips my face,  
And hangs the trees with lace,  
And blows the sky's star-embers into flame,  
I hear, 'mid song of surging seas, my name, . . .  
Then do I launch my pale dream-galleon forth,  
And close my eyes, and drift toward the North.

## Ghost Company

WHEN all my friends are wed  
And I am left alone,  
Soft grass, the flowering bed,  
A sundial of stone,  
And one far-spreading lilac tree  
In scented summer-time shall be  
Most meet of company for me.

Then when I pluck a rose,  
Or smell a jasmine spray,  
My eyes shall look on those  
Lost sweethearts of a day,—  
Phyllis shall wake in asphodel,  
And Mary in the lupin's bell,  
And Kate, brown eyed, in pansies dwell.

When icicle and flake  
Succeed green leaf and bloom,  
A hearth of logs shall wake  
Like dreams in winter gloom.  
Thus shall each moment recompense  
The falt'ring limb, the failing sense,  
And charm my happy indolence.

## The Fire Spell

WITHOUT, the rain falls, drear and cold :  
The pavement shines like polished jet,  
Save where the street lamps lace and fret  
The streaming flags with shafts of gold.

The casement trembles as the wind  
Goes headlong down the murky street ;  
I hear the tramp of many feet  
Pass and repass the window blind.

The smoke curls up in loose-spun skeins,  
With gold flames joined in timeless dance ;  
The fire spell holds me in a trance,  
The noise of London wanes and wanes.

Across my hearth from far-off lands  
A caravan procession goes :  
My room is filled with musk and rose,  
And turbaned men from desert sands.

I dream and dream till night's black noon  
In twelve clear strokes the clock-tower tells ;  
It is the sound of temple bells,  
Borne vaguely 'neath a tropic moon.



## March

WHEN dawn comes pallid into the sky,  
With a laugh and a tear and a song in one,  
And the white cloud chariots thunder by,  
And the smitten hordes of winter run.  
When the boughs of the gay green laurel dispart  
Above the waiting choir of thrushes,  
And the couched moorhen wakes and starts  
With the sound of the wind that stirs the rushes,  
And the wren sings high in the highest larch,  
Then wakes the sweet, wild month of March.

When the primrose bank turns green in a day  
And the trout stream rises and kisses it ;  
When the last snow melts on the hawthorn spray,  
And it's five o'clock ere the lamps are lit ;  
When hoops go out and tops come in,  
And chemists' thermometers climb and climb,  
And the starling families begin  
A quarrel that only ends with time,  
And the wren sings high in the highest larch,  
Then wakes the sweet wild month of March.

## MARCH

When the gardener looks for the sign of a bud  
On the rose tree nailed against the wall,  
When in trunk and twig the milk-white blood  
Throbs, and the yellow catkins fall :  
When the brown owl wakes, and the nightingale  
Hastens hither from Italy,  
And rehearses deep in the glade a scale,  
And folks declare it can't be he :  
When the wet woods lie in the hands of the wind  
As a harp of many strings to play,  
When the worm lies dead in the oakapple rind,  
And night comes in with the supper tray,  
And the wren sings high in the highest larch,  
Then wakes the sweet, wild month of March.

## The Desert Shrine

SHE kneels with two pale lilies in her hand,  
Her cold hand lily-fair,  
White robed she kneels upon the yellow sand ;  
Her lips move slow in prayer.  
On either side the tufted palm trees stand.

There is no odour as of incense, save  
The fragrance of her breath ;  
No holy water but the tears that lave  
Her cheek more pale than death.  
On either side the tufted palm trees wave.

With silent tread the first long shadows creep  
Across the face of day.  
She hath no more to sigh, no more to weep,  
Whose prostrate form is clay.  
On either side the tufted palm trees sleep.

## To a Blackbird

MINSTREL embowered amid the early green,—  
Blackbird, thy lyric sweetness, clear and strong,  
Falls in a golden flood where late have been  
But rascal sparrows' twitters all day long.  
Thou art no hireling artist, spruce and lean,  
But silence for thy song,—  
    This is the only fee  
    Thou dost demand of me.

Who is the feathered lady of thy choice,  
Sharing in leafy shade thy little throne?  
Whoe'er she be methinks she must rejoice  
'To hear the melody serenely blown,  
In thy most amorous voice,  
    O pure and happy souled,  
    From thine own trump of gold.

Sing on, O singer of the untaught art,  
Echo thy joy 'neath fair or cloudy skies;  
There is no place for sorrow in thy heart.  
Thy song shall swell, thy magic notes shall rise  
Till the last sombre shadows shall depart,  
And thou in Paradise  
    Shalt learn the mysteries  
    Of holier harmonies.

## The Strayed Londoner

Not mine, another's feet have trod  
The golden sand, the heathered hill,  
Another's eyes have sought the god  
Whose oaten flute is broke and still.  
Not mine, another's ears have heard  
The choral waves at England's gate  
Sing that wild anthem man nor bird  
Shall ever make articulate.

Alone amid the peaceful strife  
Of epic land and lyric sea,  
Some soul, not mine, praised God for life,  
And more that living he was free.  
Not I, another has beheld  
The white-winged traffic by the shore,  
Serene as when, in days of eld,  
Forth sailed its wind-blown ancestor.

## THE STRAYED LONDONER

Another's? Nay, the joy was mine  
For one brief hour in very truth,  
The seaward smell of salt and pine,  
The backward step to dreaming youth.  
But who to this Metropolis  
Returned, as child from parent strayed,  
May, 'neath his jealous mother's kiss,  
Admit he wooed a country maid?

## On a Copy of Ingres' "La Source"

LIMNED by the magic brush of him  
Whose every line is perfect song,  
There dwells within my study dim  
A maid whose eyes gaze calm and long  
Beyond the world's most distant rim.

This painted maiden lyrical,  
Holds in raised hands an earthen jar,  
Whence, odorous and mystical,  
All wonders that in music are  
Fall to her white feet virginal.

Motionless thus in sun and shade  
She holds her upturned pitcher there,  
And sees the seasons bloom and fade ;  
And still untaught of hope or care  
Her maiden lips no sign have made.

Thus by her feet shall ever flow  
Pellucid streams of lyric mirth ;  
And she, who holds the charm of woe,  
Shall ever gaze beyond the earth,  
And look not down and never know.

## Fantasia

THIS is the mystic room wherein  
Doth burn the white alchemic fire,  
Which makes of righteousness or sin  
The sweet nutrition of desire.

Unwelcome here no thought shall be ;  
Dread Melancholy or Delight  
Shall minister in turn to me,  
Grave priests by day, frail girls by night.

Here with red sword and thrusting lance  
I fight the Goths by hill and fen,  
Or face the haughty lords of France,  
Or smite the hated Saracen.

Here, when day's last red embers burn  
With flickering, uncertain flame,  
My face to Mecca do I turn,  
And breathe the secret, awful name.

And here, ere my last dream is sped,  
I touch black waves of scented hair,  
And kiss lips colder than the dead,  
And taste afresh the old despair.



## Before Spring

THE hollows in the wood are full of leaves,  
Brown sodden leaves that died long, long ago,  
    The last of Autumn's harvesting.  
Some lie beneath a meagre film of snow,  
And some are bright and spruce as robin's wing ;  
    And these when Winter grieves,  
    And draws an icy sigh,  
As if she wept in some strange secret dream,  
    Are blown in showers far and high,  
And fall on many a frozen pool and stream.

The naked trees bend each to each and weep  
As if for shame of their gaunt nudity.  
    Like children wakened in the dark  
They start, and clasp each other fearfully,  
And at the wind's voice tremble wan and stark.  
    But when the shadows creep  
    At eve, in whisperings low,  
Their summer gowns of varied green are planned ;  
    And happily they smile to know  
That April fondly lingers near at hand.

## BEFORE SPRING

Sweet April ! Ah, the little Jenny Wren,  
First tuneful harbinger of sunny hours,  
    Can hear in some remote grey glade,  
Perchance can see the very flags and flowers—  
The outposts of a royal cavalcade.  
    And now by hill and fen,  
    Through branches black and bare,  
There floats a golden stream of happy song  
    That melts the frozen misty air,  
And bids Spring's Queen in triumph pass along.

SOME of these verses have been published elsewhere, and for permission to reproduce them in this volume my thanks are due to the Editors of the *Academy*, *Country Life* and the *Daily Mail*.

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